

2012 John Adams and John Quincy Adams Pro Bono Publico Awards

Steven Dzubak

The Pro Bono Committee decided this past year to make law students eligible to receive an Adams Award to encourage precisely the type of pro bono service performed by Steven Dzubak during his law school career. Mr. Dzubak, now a recent graduate of Western New England University School of Law, is honored today for his tireless efforts advocating for environmental justice in Springfield during his three years in law school.

Mr. Dzubak sought out public interest work in his first year of law school. Not only did he research for a law professor exploring what potential legal avenues advocates could use to stop the incineration of toxic construction materials nearby, he became actively involved with Arise for Social Justice, a Western Massachusetts low-income rights organization, and its affiliated organization, Stop Incineration in

Springfield. This latter organization had formed to protest the planned incineration of 1,000 tons of construction debris that would have exacerbated air quality problems in an area already designated by the EPA as an "environmental justice community." These groups gave voice to the concerns of the many low-income, minority and marginalized Springfield residents already suffering from the highest asthma rates in Massachusetts.

Mr. Dzubak was anything but a typical student volunteer. While maintaining his outstanding academic performance, he served as a community organizer and educator, as a powerful voice in the media, as a liaison to the Springfield City Council, and assisted pro bono attorneys who were filing petitions with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. Mr. Dzubak was not only a core member of the efforts to halt the incinerator's operation, but he also became a leader in Arise for

Social Justice and in the community at large. He now serves on the Board of Directors of Arise.

As a result, in part, of Mr. Dzubak's efforts, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection issued a temporary moratorium on burning construction debris. His legislative advocacy with the Springfield City Council resulted in the revocation of the permit to incinerate construction debris.

During his law school career, Mr. Dzubak used his newfound legal and organizational skills, and his boundless passion, to make the Springfield community a safer and healthier place to live. Mr. Dzubak's success as an environmental activist reminds us why Margaret Meade once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Congratulations, Mr. Dzubak - we wish you well in what promises to be a successful and distinguished legal career.